

XVIII

The Reproach of the Cross.

A
DISCOURSE

Delivered at
GLOONEN in the County of
ANTRIM in IRELAND,
In the YEAR 1754.

By JOHN CENNICK.

*He esteemed the Reproach of Christ greater Riches
than the Treasures of Egypt, HEB. xi. 26.
God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our
Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the World is crucified to
me, and I unto the World, GAL. vi. 14.*

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H E B. xiii. 13.

*Let us go forth therefore unto him without
the Camp, bearing his Reproach.*

✠ ✠ ✠ T is in vain to hope to become true
✠ I ✠ Christians, and escape the Shame of the
✠ ✠ ✠ Cross of Jesus.

The whole Doctrine of the Son of God's Incarnation and Death, when set forth in Simplicity and Plainness, and not preached with Wisdom of Words, has been always esteemed Foolishness, and the Believers of the Gospel, and sincere Professors of true Christianity, have continually been accounted Fools; and the more zealously they have confessed Jesus Christ for their God, and the more firmly they have been attached to his Merits alone, the more the World have condemned and despised them, the more they have been made, as it were, Gazing-stocks to Men and Angels, persecuted, reviled, rejected and reproached; and if pitied by any, it has been, because (as they think), "much Religion has made them mad."

Whoever therefore unfeignedly desires to be a Christian indeed, must set his Face as a Flint against all Opposition, and resolve to deny himself,

leave all he has, and take up his Cross daily, and follow Jesus, through a gainsaying and perverse Generation.

There is no palliating the Matter, or seeking to reconcile Men of the World to our Religion, without Danger, as long as they are unenlightened from above, and stay in the Course of Flesh and Blood, judging and weighing Things according to Rules of common Sense and Reason alone, and not according to the Scriptures ; they cannot be pleased with our Manner of Acting, our Lives must seem Madness to them, and our Principles Foolishness. Our Faith must be exploded by all, and our Practice condemned by all.

The many Attempts made by great and learned Men to make the Religion of Christ coincide with the Measures and Minds of Men, have been fruitless ; it cannot be effected. The World, with all its Customs, Pomp, Glory and Pleasures, are at Enmity with the King of Saints ; the Spirit of the World is the Enemy of him and our Happiness ; therefore, it is so often repeated in the Gospel, that whoso will be a Lover of the World, or the Things of the World, is an Enemy of God, and therefore Jesus, when he makes Men his Disciples, calls them out of the World, teaches them, that neither himself, nor his Doctrine, were of the World ; wherefore the World hated them. He warns, every where, his People to leave all and follow him ; to come out from among them, i. e. the World, and be separate, and not partake with their Sins, that they might not partake of their Plagues.

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Those are Ministers of *Laodicea*, who have a Shew of Piety, and keep in with the World, and as long as they can please Men, they cannot be the Servants of Christ.

How stupid are such, who profess to believe in the Son of Man, and who conform to the World? Or who would endeavour so to dress up the Doctrine of our Lord and Master, or so speak of his Person, as to shun the Infamy of being his Disciples?

The World cannot love the Doctrine of the Lord Christ. Sensual and carnal Men cannot value the Redemption: Lovers of Pleasure, and covetous and aspiring Persons cannot like the Life of a Christian: Nor can wise Men, and such as will be governed by philosophical Principles, ever approve of our Way. They will constantly find Fault with us; blame us as weak and inconsiderate Men. They will wonder why we act and believe so unreasonably; while the Careless will condemn us altogether; the Bigotted, in every Sect, deem us Heretics; our Friends wonder why we risque thus our Honour, Name, Character and Fortune; and all Sorts will pour on us from every Side, Calumnies, Revilings, and Charges innumerable; nor can we, by any Means, satisfy them, or reconcile them to us, unless we even resolve to stay in the World with them, and suffer Religion to lead us no farther than to put on the Form of Christianity, be sober, moral and moderate People, without being Christ's Disciples indeed,

Since

Since then it is thus, since our Lord and Master has assured us it would be so, and since Experience teacheth us daily the Truth of his Words, what shall sincere Souls do? Why, for Jesus Christ's Sake, that they may please him, and for their own Sakes, that they may be saved, let them take his Advice, who is the Counsellor; let them escape for their Lives, rise up, and at the Loss of all Things follow him. Let them "go out of the Camp after him, bearing his Reproach;" and remember, that whoso loves Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Fields, or Estates, or any Thing else more than him, is not worthy of him.

Where-ever we find honest Men, or Women, or Children, who unfeignedly seek Salvation, it will not be hard to persuade them to leave all for his Name's Sake, and to count the best Riches and greatest Honours, the most desirable Pleasures, and plentifullest Fortunes and Enjoyments, but Dross and Dung, that they may win Christ, and be found in him. They can easily be brought to think, What shall it profit me, if I gain the whole World and lose my own Soul!

If they are in earnest to secure the Love of Christ, and to gain the incorruptible Crown, no Persecution, or Slander, or Shame, or Friends, or Enemies, will be able to turn them back from pursuing their high Aim; they can be content to be reduced even to Beggary itself, and smile to become like their dear Forerunner, the Scorn of Men, and the Outcast of the People. They can hear the Blasphemy of the Multitude, the Songs which
Drunkards

Drunkards make on them, and not be turned back. They can hear opprobrious and cruel Language from their once dearest Friends, endure Stripes and Blows courageously, and without answering a Word, and part with the best of Fathers, the tenderest of Mothers, and the most affectionate Relations with dry Eyes; nor be entreated to look back to all they have left in the sinful World.

The general received Opinion of many is, that now in a Christian Country, we need no more to be thus resolute; that we may enjoy the World, and be not bad Christians; that there is no Necessity of laying aside the Pomp and Fashions of the Cities, or forbear the lawful Recreations of the Times, that we may keep our Friends and our Religion too; and therefore the common Manner of Preaching, and what is almost universally approved of, is, "Do thyself no Harm. Be not righteous over-much, wherefore shouldst thou destroy thyself?" And thus are many satisfied in a State of Nature, to the last Degree dangerous.

The World is the same as formerly, and no more now, than in our Saviour's Time, can Men be his true Disciples, who are not persecuted by the World, and counted the Offscouring of all Things. The faithful Ministers will be still reckoning Babelers, Deceivers, and Men of unfair Views, and every private Christian will be Partaker in bearing the Scandal of the Cross, and share the Shame of his Lord.

Whoso values his Name, his Riches, his Possessions below, will risque losing his Part in a Kingdom

Kingdom above. And whoſo is determined to keep in with the World, muſt not be ſurprized, if he ſhall wail with the Kindreds of the Earth, in the great Day of Judgment.

Come then all ye, who love the Lord Jeſus, or wiſh to be among his People, behold the Captain of your Salvation, and valiantly tread in his Foot-ſteps. He has been made perfect through Sufferings, and is now entered into his Reſt; be of good Cheer, and go after him.

He has made himſelf of no Reputation, who was from everlaſting God; and who only is the moſt high in the Glory of God the Father. Let us then not think a Moment on our own good Name, but be content to have it ſtink in the Earth, and caſt out, if only we can but have it written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

If a King, an Emperor, ſhould ſtoop to be a Beggar, or Slave, alas, where is the great Humiliation? or if an Angel ſhould condeſcend to become a Man, and be on a Level with the pooreſt Mortal under Heaven, what is it compared with the Humiliation of God our Saviour? He who thought it no Robbery to be equal with God, and was in the Form and Nature of God from all Eternity: He who created every Thing viſible and inviſible, and is, and was, and is to come, Jehovah, God over all, bleſſed for ever; the ſame with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt; he who made and upholds all Things, was meaner and lower than any Man, and his Form was that of a Servant, in which he was yet more humbled, and his Face covered with
Shame

Shame and Spittle. He was counted a Vagrant; a base-born Child, unlearned, a Blasphemer, a seditious Person; a Murderer was preferred before him, and no Felon on a Gibbet, no sacrilegious Wretch broke on the Rack, no Gallows-Bird condemned to die for Rebellion, Robbery and Murder, was more Infamous, or more abhorred than him. O who can esteem his Reputation, when he views the Lord his God so disgraced and stripped of Glory and Majesty! Who can value his Family, his Pedigree, his Learning, his Estate, his Gifts or glorious Endowments, who lifts his Eyes to the Cross, or comes in Faith to *Mount Calvary*?

My dear Brethren, we must not think to be great or wise, or admired in the Eyes of the World; we are the poor despised Followers of a Man, who was accursed by his own People, the *Jews*; we are the Disciples of a Lord, who had no where to lay his Head; we are Scholars of a Master, whose Life was taken from the Earth in the worst Pain and most shameful Manner, that Men or Devils could invent; we are the People and Inheritance of that God, whom now thousands of those called by his Name, are ashamed to confess; our Glory, is his Cross and Sufferings; our only Strength, is his Weakness and Distress; our Boast, of his Blood and Wounds, and our only Hope, his meritorious Cries and Groans, his bloody Sweat and Obedience to the Death of the Cross.

We are the foolish People, who will know of no God but in him; we worship the Lamb that was slain, and believe unfeignedly, that he who was

crucified is the only One in Heaven and Earth, or under the Earth, who can give us eternal Life.

We credit his Words, let them appear reasonable, or surpass Reason as far as Heaven surpasses the Earth. His Words are more to us than thousands of Gold or Silver. We are Pilgrims, that are bound for the Country to which he is gone, and will never sit down, or count ourselves at Home, till we are where he is. We ask no other Glory, seek no other Honour, beg for no greater Mercy to all Eternity, than only to be with him. Hence it is, that we are so afraid of displeasing him, or yielding contrary to his loving Warning, to the Flatteries of a false blind World, wherein he is not beloved, and where Satan's Seat is. Hence it was that *Moses* refused to be called the Son of *Pharaoh's* Daughter, choosing rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season; esteeming the Reproaches of Christ, greater Riches than all the Treasures of *Egypt*. So we are satisfied to be shunned and hated every where, and carry our Lives, as it were, in our Hands. are ready every Day to die for his Sake, rather than not be his Children indeed.

Those upright Souls, those whom the holy Scriptures frequently call perfect Men, are a Sort of living Martyrs for his Sake, and that they may please him, and be in Body and Soul acceptable to him; and this not [only] in Respect of their suffering outwardly through Friends or Foes on his Account, but in respect of the crucifying the old Man with his Lusts; every impure Inclination, every Wish or Desire, however natural, as Men call

call it, which is not comely in his Eyes, is not spared, but nailed with his Body to the Tree! If a darling Pleasure, a beloved and cherished Lust stir or lurk within, though it would be as easy to tear out one of our Eyes, or chop off our right Hand, [it] is brought without Mercy, and denied and killed before him; and the last Day will make it appear how truly chaste, how faithful and clean they, who love Jesus in Sincerity, whether married or unmarried, have walked in his Presence in the World.

But the more true and faithful in this and other respects a Christian is, the more Satan will war with him, and stir up all he can to oppose him. His Faith, his Actions, his every Word will be condemned and blamed; and there is no better Way for him than to be heedless of all these Things, and behave just so, as if he was going out of the Gates of *Jerusalem* after his despised and suffering Lord, or as a wayfaring Man, who passes through a strange Country or Town, hissed at and ridiculed by the Inhabitants; his Comfort must be, that he does not belong to the Place, that he is here only as a Foreigner, and will soon see his own Land, be in his own continuing City, stand on his own Ground, arrive upon his own Shore, rest with his own dear Fellow-Pilgrims the Saints and Martyrs of Jesus, who have gone before him through much Tribulation, and are now got to the End of their Trials, whose Sufferings are over, whose Bonds and Imprisonments, whose Shame and Reproach is ceased; and what is still best of all, he shall be with his own God and Saviour, and be embraced by him and honoured in Presence of all those who fit

at Meat with him. This, this shall be the happy finishing of their Course, who have followed Jesus in the Regeneration, and continued with him in his Temptations and Shame.

My dear Friends, and you who are disposed to obey the Call of the Lord your God, let me advise you, and even entreat you not to consult with Flesh and Blood, or be swayed by Friends, Relations or Benefactors, but with a single Eye to please the God of your Salvation, Christ Jesus, and with a whole Heart, leave the World, come out from among them, and no more touch the unclean Thing, and he will receive you: Dedicate yourselves intirely to him, who loves you more than a Parent his only Child, and depart out of the *Egyptian* Estate, into which all Flesh are fallen; and without reflecting on, or railing at others who stay behind, take up your daily Cross, and at all Events and Hazards follow the Lamb.

Do not dream, after you have done this, that your Self-denial, your recluse Life, your forsaking the World or abstemious Behaviour, with your other pious and religious Deeds, shall buy you Heaven, or merit the Favour of the Holy One. You are beloved freely. It is his Nature to love and pity poor Souls. His Delight is in Mercy, he waits to be gracious, and therefore it would be a Sort of spiritual Theft and Robbery to ascribe in the least Degree our Safety, or future or present Happiness, to our own Goodness or Obedience. All this is his free Gift, and which he bestows willingly on all who seek it. All our Saviour calls you to, or asks of you, is to leave the World, to come out of
their

their Noise and Hurry, to lay down the Weights, which have hindered ye to run the spiritual Race, and break off the Bonds of the Customs and Fashions of a sinful Generation, and retire to enjoy the Liberty of the Children of God, who accompany him, and who sit down at his Feet and learn of him, who insure to themselves a Part and Interest in his Favour and Love, and whose Title to the Kingdom purchased with his precious Blood is clear and sure.

It is a glorious and blessed Privilege to be released from the lying Vanities of Men, and to be disengaged from their inconstant Friendship.

Is a Child of God anointed to preach the Gospel to the Poor? Is he a Minister of Jesus, a Servant of the Sanctuary? Let him wait on his Office faithfully, but let him be aware of the Rich and the Great, for few of them choose to be the Lord's; Their Promises, Preferments and Threatnings, he must value alike, seeking only, if possible, to observe who among them are not ashamed of Jesus Christ, but would fain be saved; such he must attend and labour with, without any View of Reward or Recompence, till the Resurrection of the Just; but his chief Blessing and Fruit will be among the common People, such heard our Lord gladly, and such as the Rest of Mankind deem poor Fools, and weak, are the precious Treasure of the Church. Let the Minister then only seek to please our Saviour, who is his Bishop and Constituent alone; let him keep clear from the Blood of all Men, and if he cannot win them by a loving, laborious and Servant-like Behaviour, and if the
gracious

gracious Words of Christ and his Apostles do not prevail, let him not be bribed to prophecy smooth Things, nor be over-awed to forbear, to declare the whole Counsel of God. Let his Eye be on the strict Account he must one Day make, and while he remembers with Trembling, that the Souls have been purchased with the Lord's own Blood, and is thereby induced and constrained to preach and labour in Season and out of Season to gain them over to the Saviour, whose wandered Sheep they are; let him on the other Hand know, that by no Art or Cunning this may be effected, but in true Simplicity and godly Sincerity he must prevail and be successful, only by having his Master's Presence and Blessing with him; and to equivocate, or dissemble, or cry Peace when there is no Peace, would be cowardly to shun the Reproach of the Cross, and make his Labour of no Effect, it would risque his Joy and the present Peace of his Heart, grieve the Holy Spirit, and tempt the Lord, who hideth himself, to leave him in a Cloud, or, as it is said in *Jeremiah*, to confound him before them.

That Minister who is wise, wishes only to be honourable in the Eyes of the Lord, and to finish his Course comfortably; if he can but die in favour with his Master, and behold him smiling to receive him to his Sabbath, if he can but say, in his last Hours, I have fought the good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith, and feel within the Testimony of a good Conscience, and the Love of God shed abroad by the Holy Ghost; he seeks no more, he has gained his Saviour's Aim, and shall bless the Day he ever was born.

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But are ye private Christians, and not called to be Prophets, but eased, and spared, and excused from such Burdens? Then let not your Heads be filled with Reasoning, seek not to be wise and full of Words, but first and chiefly seek to be assured of your Election in Christ, leave no Stone unturned to make it certain that he has chosen you out of the World. Or, is it gone thus far with you? O then happy, happy, happy Folk, whoever you are! leap for Joy when you are slandered unjustly for his Sake, or for the Sake of the Gospel; but take care that ye are not blamed deservedly, for this would be a Scandal to your holy Profession. Whatever is of good Report, viz. Industry, Honesty, Gentleness, Lowliness, a Willingness to help any one to the utmost of your Power, rather suffering Want than be indebted, or suspected on such Accounts, glad to live plain in Diet, and House, and Cloaths, for the Son of Man's sake, and labouring with your own Hands to relieve necessitous Persons, this is pleasing in the Eyes of our Redeemer; but if Men will despise you because you believe Jesus is your Lord God, because you pray to him, or because you adore him Incarnate, or that you will allow of no real or true Righteousness but his, nor will acknowledge any Safety but in his Wounds and under his Cross; if, because you will know nothing, praise nothing, exalt nothing but the crucified Jesus, do not be dismayed; and should it happen that you should be hard beset with reasoning Men, disputing and jangling Persons, abide in your Heart low at the Feet of Jesus, let your Answers be few, and always, It is written. Are you used cruelly? Look to him who bore the Contradiction

tradition of Sinners against himself. Are you treated unjustly? commit your Cause to him who judgeth righteously. Are you reviled? O! I pray you, learn of Jesus, to be meek and lowly, and revile not again. Do you lose much? It shall be restored to you again above. Are you brought to the Bar, or before Magistrates? Value it not, Jesus was there before you, and remember the good Confession he witnessed, when he was adjured by the High Priest to answer, and which he also made before *Pontius Pilate*. Abide thereby, and know no other Lord, no other Righteousness, no other Good, except no Help, or Right, but from him; and be faithful and true to Him; so will he keep you in Peace, which the World cannot give, and his Joy shall be fulfilled in you. Should it lie in your Power to revenge the Injustice or Injury done to you; for the Lord's sake, do not touch it with the least of your Fingers; but if your Countrymen, or Friends, or Brother repent, forgive them; and if your Enemies fall bound into your Hands, forgive and loose them; if they hunger, feed them; and so bear with them, and all who are against you for your Religion's sake, as Jesus bore with you in the State of your Enmity.

Above all, be not shy or afraid of Sufferings, or Shame for Christ's sake. Our Beloved has told us how it will go with us, if we are his, that the World will hate us, that we shall be cast out for his Sake, and our Names be reproached on his Account: but since so the Prophets were treated, and since they have called the Master of the House, a *Samaritan*, (which, at that Time, meant Heretic)

a Devil, a Madman, a *Belzebub*, let us not mind it, if they thus call the Children of his Household. Do not, let it not grieve us too much, or afflict us too deeply, to be shunned, disowned, and slighted, or even to be wholly forsaken of Friends and dear Acquaintances; we only tread the Steps of the Believers in all Ages; it is the High-way wherein they walked who followed the Lamb, and are now entered their Glory. Only let us cherish the blessed Moments of Intercourse with our Saviour; let us live with him, and continually be busy in pleasing him; let us be still, and at Peace in our Hearts, through the Witness of his Spirit, that he has forgiven us, and washed us in his own Blood from all our Sins; and by an uninterrupted Communion and Fellowship with him, we shall, without Fear or Amazement, be called home, and get out of the Reach of every Danger, Shame, and Misery. Now our first business is, to know Jesus has suffered without *Jerusalem*, he has been deemed unworthy to live, and dragged out of their Gates, loaded with Sins innumerable, and with the Curse and Wrath of all his People; let us go after him; let us be the despised Disciples of this dear and despised Lord. Let our Lives be a Pilgrimage to *Calvary*, and let our Eyes and Hearts be fastened on him, till it can be felt within, we are his Redeemed-Ones, and till our Eyes so often red with weeping, and our Hearts tender with feeling our Sin and his dying and divine Love, shew to Angels and Men, we have been with Jesus.

We have hitherto been like Soldiers, who have rested at Ease in the Tent, while our Captain suffers

fers in the Field. Indeed we cannot help, he has borne the Heat of the Battle, and has conquered; but he gives us the Honour to share his Shame, and the Prize. Let us then go out of the Camp to him, bearing his Reproach; let our Songs of Triumph be his dying on the Tree, and our whole Religion to love and live to him, who endured the Cross, and despised the Shame for our Sakes. To him be everlasting Praise and Glory. *Amen.*

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